

Other settlements have been more fortunate. This Ahmedabad community benefits from a slum networking project that has brought together 4 municipal agencies, international donors, and non-governmental organizations. Working with resident groups, the project has paved the streets, piped in treated water to each house, built wastewater drains, and financed residents' new latrines. Here, residents enjoy their new street.



5 Municipal officials learn to improve urban services by sharing information about what works with their peers. Here, the USAID-funded Financial Institutions Reform and Expansion (FIRE) project meets with staff members of the City Managers Association of Gujarat (CMAG). They are discussing plans to provide training and technical assistance to city officials throughout the state and to finish their new website (www.cmag-india.org). CMAG is a member of the Urban Management Training Network that is coordinated by the National Institute of Urban Affairs under the FIRE project.

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The Indo-USAID FIRE Project in PHOTOGRAPHS



India's cities have a long, rich history. In her lifetime, this woman in Ahmedabad's historic walled city has witnessed long-standing traditions confronted with dramatically changing technologies and ancient buildings threatened by recurrent natural disasters. These photographs tell the story of some of the changes occurring in Indian cities and the Financial Institutions Reform and Expansion (FIRE) project's participation in these changes.



Rapid urbanization and modernization have brought visible benefits to millions of India's urban residents. Skyscrapers

with modern telecommunications, corporate headquarters, and world-class hotels proclaim the growing affluence of many Indian cities. Yet more than a third of India's urban population lives in crushing poverty in slums like these on the banks of the Sabarmati River in Ahmedabad.



Some of these informal settlements lack the most basic urban services—potable water, sanitation, and garbage collection. Residents do not have title to the land on which they built their houses, limiting both their motivation and their ability to borrow money to improve their living conditions.



A project of the US Agency for International Development



6

They do not pay for this service, nor is the stand post metered. The water runs freely, when it runs.

Municipal officials throughout India are working hard to provide treated water to their residents. Here, water runs from a community stand post in a poor section of the city and residents wait in line to fill their pots with this precious resource and carry it home.



9

Indian officials are studying ways of financing capital expenses for water infrastructure projects through municipal bonds and covering operation and maintenance expenses through increased revenue from water tariffs paid by the users. Recently, the Government of India issued guidelines for tax-free municipal bonds.

The city water treatment plant shown here uses the same technologies as those in more developed nations with the same result—safe water. While water coverage and service quality are improving in many places in India, municipal utilities are overwhelmed by the growing urban population and lack of resources.



12

cities adopt a more commercial approach — as a means for the utilities to obtain the resources to provide better service to all.

This woman washing dishes in water piped directly to her home is a beneficiary of improved water service delivery. Studies have shown that customers are willing to pay fair fees for municipal water if they see improvements in service. The FIRE project advocates that



16

Composting plants are being built and managed by private firms under contractual agreements with municipalities in many cities in India. The company raises the required funding, builds the plant, and retains income from compost sales. The city delivers its solid waste to the plant and provides the land. Here, the city's waste is placed in windrows for biodegrading at the Celrich recycling plant near Ahmedabad.

Waiting for water. No one knows for sure when the water will flow. Water service is intermittent, an hour or two in the morning and another half-hour in the afternoon, on good days. The frequent loss of pressure, together with leaks in the poorly maintained transmission pipes, contributes to the contamination of water on its way to this stand post.



7



Ahmedabad was the first city in India to issue a municipal bond without a state guarantee, with assistance from USAID's FIRE project. With the proceeds, the city built the Raska water project that supplies water to 60 percent of the city's population.

15

Open dumping alongside commercial establishments and animals eating uncollected garbage are common sights in India's cities.



13



Solid waste management (SWM) is a key urban environmental service. Here, the director of SWM for the Ahmadabad Municipal Corporation watches a municipal dump truck unloading waste into dumpsters at a central collection center. From here, the trash is taken to the city's recycling plant.

14



17

The FIRE project assisted Kolhapur officials to prepare and review bids for a composting plant to better dispose of the city's solid waste. Here, FIRE staff reviews plans for an expanded sewage plant adjacent to the composting project with a state water officer on loan to the municipal corporation and a representative of the private operator.

Many cities are beginning to address the serious problems of rapid urbanization, especially as they affect the poor. Over the past seven years, the FIRE project has supported Indian cities with project development and financing, resource mobilization, decentralization, capacity building, and training.

Rivers are the main source of the city water supply. They suffer pollution from factories' and upriver communities' untreated sewage to everyday activities such as this woman washing her buffalo on the banks of the Pachganga River. The Kolhapur Municipal Corporation (KMC) water department's main intake point is behind the shrine.



8



11

Increasing equity and efficiency of water billing is key to enabling local officials to improve service delivery. Here, KMC officials show a stack of water bill receipts, filled out by their staff by hand. They are testing a software program, developed by a local company, to computerize water billing and record keeping.



These street sweepers are municipal employees responsible for collecting trash and bringing it in carts to dump trucks at mobile collection centers. SWM staff comprise 30 to 50 percent of all municipal employees in India. Some cities are contracting with community-based organizations to provide this service to poor areas and to create jobs for their residents.

15